

General Order

Houston Police Department



ISSUE DATE:

November 20, 2019

NO.

200-10

REFERENCE: Supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars and Directives, and General Order 200-10, dated February 7, 2014

SUBJECT: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

POLICY

This General Order and the *Emergency Response Plan (ERP)* establish procedures and responsibilities for emergency management and required notifications. The Crime Analysis & Command Center (hereinafter referred to as Command Center) is responsible for ensuring emergency management procedures are invoked and required notifications are made.

During alerts and emergencies, employees shall take reasonable steps to monitor the various media outlets for announcements concerning when to report for duty.

This General Order applies to all employees.

DEFINITIONS

Alert Status. A precursor to mobilization; a heightened awareness throughout the department that each division's emergency action plan may be put into effect.

Civil Disorder. A public assembly or public gathering wherein some or all of the individuals engage in violations of City ordinance or state law.

Command Post. The location from which an *incident commander* coordinates all HPD response activities to an incident. The command post is located outside any danger or hazard zone and its location may change as the need arises.

Disaster. A catastrophe that threatens extraordinary loss of life or property (e.g., severe weather, hazardous material accidents, large fires, explosions, terrorist incidents).

Essential Employees. All classified employees, all civilian employees so designated by division commanders or divisional SOPs, or any employee so designated by the Chief of Police or the Mayor.

Hazardous Material (HAZMAT). Any item or agent (biological, chemical, radiological, and/or physical) that has the potential to cause harm to humans, animals, or the environment, either by itself or through interaction with other factors.

Incident Commander. The individual responsible for coordinating all HPD response activities at an incident site including, but not limited to, the development of strategies and tactics, ordering and releasing resources, and managing all incident operations at the site. As an incident evolves, the individual serving as the incident commander may change depending upon the type of incident, geographic area, or delegation of authority based on rank or qualification, or due to unforeseen operational issues.

Mass Arrest. The arrest of 20 or more persons arising out of a single incident.

Night Commander. The night commander shall be of the rank of lieutenant or commander and shall provide a command presence during non-traditional business hours. The night commander shall possess the operational authority of the Chief of Police until such time that the night commander is relieved by a ranking supervisor.

Public Assembly. An individual or group of individuals gathered for the purpose of exercising constitutionally-protected free speech and assembly rights. Police resources may be required depending on the scope and nature of the assembly.

Public Gathering. A gathering of individuals not associated with a constitutionally-protected activity (e.g., flash mob). Depending upon the activity and scope of the gathering, police resources may be required.

Significant Event. Any event that seems likely to result in media attention or substantial public attention, or that may require additional administrative action or police resources.

Staging Area. A temporary location for personnel, supplies, vehicles, and/or equipment awaiting operational assignment or deployment to an incident. Staging areas may also include support services for emergency responders.

1 SIGNIFICANT EVENT NOTIFICATION

Significant Events

Significant events require specific notifications and documentation. For detailed parameters of what qualifies each of the events listed below as a *significant event*, refer to the applicable General Order. Significant events include, but are not limited to:

- a. Incidents that require a police response and that draw the attention of the media.
- b. Incidents that involve any law enforcement officer or an HPD employee shot at or shot.
- c. Incidents involving discharge of a:
 1. Firearm by an officer
 2. Soft-impact weapon by an officer if serious bodily injury (SBI) or death occurs
 3. Conducted energy device (CED) by an officer if SBI or death occurs

except while engaged in training or lawful recreation and only if parameters are met as detailed in applicable General Orders.

- d. Vehicle pursuits that involve HPD personnel and entail one or more of the following criteria:
 1. A pursuit that receives media coverage.
 2. A pursuit excessive in duration.
 3. A vehicular crash caused as a result of the pursuit.
 4. An injury or fatality to any individual as a result of the pursuit.
 5. A driver of the pursued vehicle that is a juvenile under the age of 11.
 6. A weapon discharge by any of the parties involved in the pursuit.

The guidelines of General Order 600-04, **Motor Vehicle Pursuits**, shall be followed in addition to significant event notification.

- e. Major vehicular crashes with serious bodily injury involving an on- or off-duty City employee in a City vehicle.
- f. Death of or serious bodily injury to an HPD employee, or a law enforcement officer from any other agency (on or off duty).
- g. Injuries to HPD personnel:
 - 1. On duty.
 - 2. Off duty and police-related.
 - 3. Intentionally self-inflicted (on or off duty), regardless of severity.

This includes any type of communicable disease to which a classified or civilian employee might have been exposed (see General Order 300-21, **Communicable Disease Policy**).

- h. Arrest (excluding traffic citations) of any of the following individuals:
 - 1. HPD employees including police cadets.
 - 2. Celebrity/prominent citizen.
 - 3. Any elected official.
 - 4. Any other City of Houston employee.
- i. Incidents involving a foreign government representative (employee of an embassy or consulate) who:
 - 1. Claims diplomatic immunity.
 - 2. Is seriously injured.
 - 3. Is deceased.
 - 4. Is arrested.
- j. *Disasters* (natural or man-made).
- k. Drownings that occur in any of the following:
 - 1. Public pools.
 - 2. Lake Houston or other bodies of water including tributaries.
 - 3. Private pools involving victims under the age of 17 (e.g., residential, apartment, hotel pools).
- l. Any *public assembly, public gathering, or civil disorder* in which any of the following occurs:
 - 1. The media shows an interest.
 - 2. An arrest is made.
 - 3. The actions of the participants are newsworthy.
 - 4. The nature of the event is controversial or noteworthy.
- m. Bomb threats, suspicious devices, explosions, or incidents involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or hazardous material (HAZMAT).

- n. Hate crimes, including threats of violence.
- o. Threat of serious injury or death against:
 - 1. An officer
 - 2. An elected official
 - 3. A head of state
 - 4. Immediate family of any of the above
- p. Police actions involving:
 - 1. *Special threat situations* (SWAT)
 - 2. Active shooter situations
 - 3. Large undercover operations
 - 4. *Mass arrests*
 - 5. Evacuations
 - 6. Elected officials
- q. Death of or serious injury to a citizen or suspect while under police detention.
- r. Police impersonations while committing a crime.
- s. Criminal activity, fatalities, or arrests occurring on, at, or near any City owned property (e.g., buildings, parks, and land).
- t. Alarms, burglaries, or vandalism at an HPD facility.
- u. Suspicious activity or information that may relate to terrorist or extremist activity. Additionally, incidents involving the theft or loss of weapons, explosives, chemicals, or radiological material, especially if it occurs at a location considered a critical infrastructure.
- v. Whenever an outside agency requests assistance involving the following HPD divisions and units:
 - 1. Dive Team
 - 2. Canine Detail
 - 3. Air & Marine Division
 - 4. SWAT Detail
 - 5. Bomb Squad
- w. Aircraft incidents including hijacking or skyjacking at or enroute to any Houston airport facility and aircraft crashes within a 45-mile radius of Police Headquarters.
- x. The following noteworthy events:
 - 1. Complete closure of a freeway.
 - 2. Adulterated or tampered food incidents.
 - 3. Arrest of a law enforcement officer.
 - 4. Lost or stolen HPD identification or equipment.
 - 5. Incidents involving federal judges or elected officials.

6. Any equipment failure that impacts the continuity of operations.
7. Power outages or blackouts affecting police services or an area of the city.
8. Lost or stolen police property containing criminal justice information (e.g., stolen police vehicle containing a laptop, computer from a police facility).

The above list is not meant to be all-inclusive; officers should use their judgment in notifying the Command Center regarding incidents not listed (such as multiple arrests or significant occurrences responding personnel believe the Chief of Police should be aware of).

Notification and Response

Officers made aware of a significant event shall immediately inform their supervisor, who shall notify the Command Center. Notifications shall not be delayed due to incomplete information. The Command Center shall be notified as additional information becomes available. On-scene personnel shall cooperate with Command Center representatives and provide all information requested. In the absence of a supervisor, the senior officer on the scene shall have this responsibility.

Command Center personnel shall make the required notifications to the night commander, HPD personnel, and other concerned City departments.

Upon notification of a significant event, the night commander shall exercise operational authority and depending on the circumstances, may re-allocate personnel and other departmental resources to address any significant event or to further the police mission. After hours, the on-duty night commander is responsible for responding to all relevant incidents addressed by this General Order to ensure that they are properly handled and that the integrity of the scene is maintained.

Division level personnel are responsible for keeping their chain of command informed of events. Command Staff members may contact the Command Center any time for an update on significant event incidents.

Supervisors shall document the significant event using the approved *Significant Event Report* form available on the department's Intranet Portal. A *Significant Event Report* form shall be completed by a supervisor at the conclusion of the event and immediately sent to the Command Center. A follow-up telephone call must be made to the Command Center by the supervisor that completed the *Significant Event Report* form to verify that the report was received.

The Command Center shall prepare *Significant Event Reports* for the Chief of Police, executive assistant chiefs, and assistant chiefs. *Significant Event Reports* from Internal Affairs Division shall be sent directly to the Office of the Chief of Police. Homicide Division shall send *Significant Event Reports* directly to the Office of the Chief of Police and the Command Center.

All divisions with call-up personnel shall send via their chain of command to the commander of the Command Center their 24/7 on-call rosters when there is a change in their on-call personnel status or whenever deemed appropriate.

Divisions shall send Emergency Mobilization Plan Rosters (EMPRs) to the Command Center only during the event of a natural or other disaster, catastrophic event (see section 2 of this General Order), special event of any significance, or at the request of the Command Center. All divisions shall continue to be responsible for maintaining and archiving their daily EMPRs.

See General Order 500-08, **Required Booking Information and Procedures**, for jail notification procedures.

2 CATASTROPHIC EVENT NOTIFICATION

Department personnel shall contact the Command Center to report all catastrophic events (see below) as required by City of Houston Human Resources Department directive. Command Center personnel shall make the required notifications to the City of Houston Human Resources Department's Risk Management Safety Division. Officers made aware of a catastrophic event shall immediately inform their supervisor, who shall notify the Command Center. In the absence of a supervisor, the primary responding officer on the scene shall have this responsibility. Notifications shall not be delayed due to incomplete or unavailable information.

A catastrophic event includes, but is not limited to, on-duty incidents involving:

- a. A fatality involving a City employee.
- b. More than two City employees seriously injured.
- c. A City vehicle crash involving more than three vehicles.
- d. An injury to a City employee consisting of amputation, head injury, heart attack, serious electrical shock, or spinal injury.
- e. A crash involving a City employee that draws media attention.
- f. An illness or exposure due to a serious contagion or biological hazard (see section 5 of this General Order and General Order 300-21, **Communicable Disease Policy**).

3 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The Mayor delegated the responsibility for management and coordination of the City's Emergency Management Plan to the Office of Emergency Management (OEM). Under the City of Houston Emergency Management Plan, the Houston Police Department is responsible for law enforcement, emergency notification and evacuation of persons, traffic and crowd control, and securing damaged or disaster areas. The Command Center is HPD's liaison to the OEM.

The *Emergency Response Plan (ERP)* is the department's written plan for mobilizing department personnel to respond to a wide range of incidents, events, and disasters. The *ERP* describes the basic response concepts of, but not limited to, the following:

- a. Managing and mitigating incidents under the National Incident Management System (NIMS).
- b. *Incident commander*.
- c. Special Response Group (SRG).
- d. Rapid Mobilization Personnel (RMP).

- e. *Alert status* and emergency readiness.
- f. Partial and full mobilization procedures and responsibilities.
- g. Command Center operations.
- h. Specialized equipment.
- i. Required reports.
- j. Outside assistance.
- k. Response guidelines to specific types of incidents or emergencies.

For more information on specific duties and responsibilities, see the *ERP* located on the department's Intranet Portal.

The Catastrophic Planning Unit of the Special Operations Division, Homeland Security Command is responsible for maintaining the *ERP* and applicable parts of the City of Houston Emergency Management Plan. The *ERP* is issued to all divisions and commands. Each member of the Command Staff shall maintain an updated copy of the plan and make it accessible for daily use by assigned personnel.

The Chief of Police may place the entire department in an *alert status* when an emergency is anticipated or has already occurred. The location and type of emergency shall determine what impact an *alert status* has on any particular division. During an alert, personnel should anticipate any of the following:

- l. Working extended hours and different shift hours.
- m. Cancellation of days off and leaves of absence.
- n. Reassignment to different duties, responsibilities, supervisors, divisions, and or commands.
- o. Classified personnel reporting to work with a complete uniform including authorized and issued equipment.
- p. Civilians designated as essential employees reporting for assignment.

Unless otherwise directed, all classified employees notified of an emergency response are to report at their regular shift times to the designated mobilization site in full uniform with all authorized and issued equipment. If officers are unable to report to their regular duty stations during an emergency response (e.g., due to weather or road conditions), they shall report to the nearest police facility. Upon arriving, officers shall report for duty to that station's desk sergeant and contact their supervisor advising them of the situation. For more information regarding absences due to adverse weather see General Order 300-09, **Absence From Duty—Classified**.

Essential employees' duty to report supersedes any announcement of an ordered evacuation or an announcement from the Mayor or local media outlet.

During an emergency response, civilian personnel not designated as *essential employees* shall contact their work assignment for instructions regarding reporting to work. For more information regarding absences due to adverse weather see General Order 900-01, **Absence From Duty–Civilian**.

The Command Center shall make the initial call-up notifications necessary to set the department's emergency response in motion. In emergencies, a Command Center supervisor of the rank of lieutenant or higher has the authority to reassign department personnel and resources to ensure the effectiveness of the department's initial response.

Seven Critical Tasks

During an emergency response, the on-duty area patrol sergeant or lieutenant shall immediately respond to the scene of the emergency and take charge of the department's response until relieved. The first supervisor on the scene of an emergency should ensure all of the following seven critical tasks are accomplished:

- a. Secure and establish communications
- b. Identify any danger or kill zones and safe routes to the scene
- c. Establish an inner perimeter
- d. Establish an outer perimeter
- e. Establish a field *command post*
- f. Establish a *staging area*
- g. Request additional resources as necessary

See General Order 600-41, **Weapons of Mass Destruction**, for definitions of inner perimeter and outer perimeter.

4 EVACUATION

Texas law allows the Mayor or county judge to declare all or part of an area a disaster area and to order mandatory evacuation. This declaration authorizes officers to control not only entry and exit to a declared disaster area, but also the movement of persons inside a disaster area including restricting persons from occupying their home or other dwelling.

HPD is responsible for the evacuation of any part of the city of Houston. Officers shall assist and encourage persons to seek shelter or safety away from a disaster zone. Any evacuation shall be coordinated with the Department Operations Center (DOC), which shall liaison with the OEM.

Police-Related Incidents

The decision and responsibility to evacuate due to police-related incidents (e.g., SWAT situations, bomb threats) shall be made by the ranking HPD classified supervisor on the scene.

Fire Department Related Incidents

If the Houston Fire Department (HFD) is involved in an incident (e.g., HAZMAT event or major fire), the on-scene ranking supervisor from HFD shall make the decision to evacuate.

5 HAZARDOUS MATERIAL INCIDENTS

HFD has primary responsibility for HAZMAT incidents. Officers working a scene involving a hazardous material must protect themselves as well as citizens from the harmful effects of hazardous materials.

Duties

When emergencies involve hazardous materials, the following actions shall be taken in addition to the seven critical tasks (see section 3 of this General Order):

- a. Immediately notify the dispatcher of a HAZMAT incident. The dispatcher shall notify a Watch Command supervisor, who will then notify the Command Center.
- b. Resist rushing in. Stay clear of all spills, vapors, fumes, and smoke. If a harmful chemical release occurs, officers should seek shelter (e.g., vehicle or building) upwind from the incident.
- c. If possible, cautiously approach the incident from upwind to a point where the HAZMAT placard or orange panel information can be read.
- d. Identify the hazardous material by finding any one of the following:
 1. The 4-digit identification number on the placard or orange panel.
 2. The 4-digit identification number (after UN/NA) on a shipping paper or package.
 3. The name of the material on the shipping paper, placard, or package.
- e. Determine what hazardous material is involved by typing the abbreviation for chemical (CHEM), a blank space, and then the 4-digit identification number (e.g., "CHEM 1234") or the name of the chemical into one of the department's computer systems. Officers using mobile computing devices (MCDs) will be able to obtain only basic chemical information. Therefore, they shall contact the dispatcher or Command Center for information on emergency action (initial response, isolation, and protective action distances).

After determining the material involved, read the entire on-screen information before initiating any action. If no computer is available, call the Command Center for hazardous material identification. If instructed or if signs of contamination are evident, officers should first utilize the equipment issued to them in their Department "Blue Bag", before assisting others in the affected area.

- f. If possible, remove injured persons from the affected area with as little direct contact as feasible.

- g. Separate and detain for further examination all persons, including emergency first responders, who may have had contact with hazardous or radioactive materials or persons.
- h. Ensure all equipment and persons are checked by HFD personnel for radiation or other HAZMAT contamination.
- i. Do not eat, drink, or smoke in the affected area.

Reports

If no motor vehicle is involved, the officers dispatched to the call of an incident involving hazardous materials shall make the original incident report. A Vehicular Crimes Division officer shall be responsible for completing the crash report and incident report in all motor vehicle crashes involving hazardous materials. A supervisor shall be dispatched in all cases involving HAZMAT incidents. The supervisor dispatched to the incident shall make a supplement report to the original incident report. The supervisor's supplement report is necessary to provide a formal record for future reference should any officers experience unforeseen medical complications from exposure to the hazardous material. All HAZMAT reports and supplements shall contain the following information:

- a. Names of all officers involved in the incident or crash.
- b. Name of the hazardous material(s) involved.
- c. Actions taken by officers to evacuate personnel and handle the scene.
- d. Details of the incident or crash.

If an employee is injured, the employee's supervisor shall submit the appropriate injured on duty paperwork.

6 AFTER-HOURS ASSISTANCE AND REQUESTS

The night commander serves as the designated representative of the Chief of Police during non-business hours. This includes handling inquiries and requests from criminal justice personnel and meeting with any dignitaries or high-ranking officials visiting a police station or experiencing difficulties that can be alleviated by department personnel.

If another criminal justice agency requests the use of personnel or equipment, a Command Center supervisor shall coordinate those requests with the appropriate assistant chief before providing the aid. During large scale (regional) emergencies or special events, requests either to or from outside agencies for equipment, personnel, or assistance shall be directed to the City of Houston OEM in order to track these resources for reimbursement.

Whenever Internal Affairs Division (IAD) is closed and no one from the requesting supervisor's division is able to enter an IAD complaint into the computer system to obtain an Issue Record Form (IRF) number, then the requesting supervisor may contact the Command Center in order to obtain an IRF number. Moreover, a Command Center supervisor shall contact the on-call IAD lieutenant in all instances required by department policy or at the request of another supervisor.

When an in-progress significant event requires the assistance of a public information officer after hours, a Command Center supervisor shall notify the on-call public information officer. Under no circumstances shall media representatives be told to contact the Command Center.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Art Acevedo', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Art Acevedo
Chief of Police